

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION WITH WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Ordered by the House of Assembly to be printed, and plain lithographed, 7th October, 1873.

54/77.

Western Australia, Colonial Secretary's Office, Perth,
3rd September, 1873.

Sir—I have the honor, by direction of His Excellency Governor Weld, to enclose, for the information of the South Australian Government, a map showing the local telegraph lines in this Colony, connecting at the present time, by nine hundred miles of single wires, the principal towns and districts. A farther extension in conjunction with the railway between Geraldton and Northampton has been provided for; and, in the opinion of His Excellency, the time has arrived when a still further and more important outward extension of the system has become a matter for serious consideration.

Two extensions of land lines at the present time are called for—one from Champion Bay to Roebourne, on the North-West Coast; and another from Albany (King George's Sound) to Esperance Bay and Port Eucla, on the boundary of the South Australian Territory.

The latter is not only of importance to local interests and the increase of settlement, but is a matter of primary consideration to the Colony at large, if connected from Eucla, to the telegraph system of the Australian Colonies; and it is on this subject that I am desired to seek the co-operation of your Government.

From reliable data, it can be unmistakably proved that the trading and commercial relations of this Colony are already drifting to the Australian Colonies from Great Britain and other Countries; and as this tendency is manifested in various ways, it may fairly be hoped that telegraphic communication, if established, would result in a large increase of business with the Eastern Colonies, and this intercourse will be greatly furthered by the monthly communication between the several ports of the Colony by the steamer sailing for King George's Sound in connexion with the arrival and departure of the mail steamer for Port Adelaide.

South Australia has been foremost among the Australian Colonies in her appreciation of the electric telegraph, and has demonstrated to the Australian Colonies the inestimable advantages of instantaneous communication with distant countries; and His Excellency Governor Weld feels little doubt that she will entertain the proposal to include Western Australia in the telegraphic system of the Australian Colonies, and so complete the telegraph circuit of Australia.

To accomplish this it will, of course, be necessary that your Government should bring a wire to its boundary line at Port Eucla, on the understanding that a wire was carried thither from Albany (King George's Sound) by the Government of this Colony.

It is estimated that the amount and nature of the present trade of this Colony with India and the Eastern ports would ensure at least one thousand (out and in) messages per annum to the Adelaide and Port Darwin line, and to this may be added the Home trade and the traffic of the monthly passengers by the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamers.

At the lowest estimate of international traffic, inward and outward, six hundred messages per month can be relied on—and it is not unfair to assume that this number will be doubled in twelve months; and at a charge of, say, six shillings per message, to be equally divided between the Colonies of South and West Australia, would amount for the first year to £2,160, the second £4,320.

Taking the whole distance at thirteen hundred miles, and this is probably in excess of the reality, and the cost at the rate of £35 a mile, inclusive of stations, would involve an expenditure of £45,500, the interest for which, at five per cent., would amount to £2,275 per annum.

Telegraph posts from hence can be landed at Eucla at a very reasonable rate, at which place one station would suffice, which can be maintained from hence at moderate cost.

I beg your early and careful attention to this matter.

I have the honor, &c.,

The Honorable the Chief Secretary,
Adelaide, South Australia.

FRED. P. BARLEE.

[Report of Superintendent of Telegraphs.]

Electric Telegraph Department, Office of Superintendent,
Adelaide, October 1, 1873.

Sir—Having carefully considered the proposal made by Mr. Barlee in his letter of the 3rd ult., herewith returned, for the construction of a line of Electric Telegraph between Port Augusta and Albany, King George's Sound, at the joint cost of the two Colonies, I have the honor to report that I fully concur with His Excellency Governor Weld that the time has now arrived when the extension so long contemplated should be carried out, and that the work properly devolves upon South and Western Australia.

The

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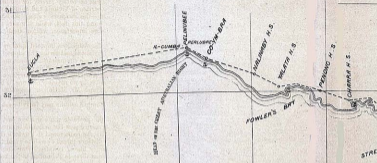
SKETCH PLAN

SKEWING

PROPOSED TELEGRAPH LINE FROM PORT AUGUSTA TO EUCLA

TO CONNECT

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



NOTE "H. S." ABBREVIATION OF HEAD STATION

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The latter is now the only Colony on the Australian Continent shut out from the telegraphic system connecting these Colonies with the rest of the civilized world; and as she is willing at her own cost to bridge over more than one half of the gap which separates us, I think she is justified in asking us to co-operate by meeting her at Eucla with a line from Port Augusta.

At the present time, as appears from Mr. Barlee's letter, there is something like 900 miles of telegraph already in operation in Western Australia—connecting Perth with Albany in the south, and with Champion Bay in the north, and including all the principal towns within that space. Further extension is projected northwards to Roebourne; and there can be no doubt that with the fresh impetus and facilities which the telegraph would give, a large and increasing trade would soon spring up between that distant settlement and the eastern Colonies.

It might not, perhaps, be worth our while to incur so large an outlay merely for the local traffic; but it should be borne in mind that the Ocean Mail Service of Victoria and South Australia must, in all probability, always follow the Suez Route—the steamers calling at King George's Sound, or some other Port in Western Australia—and this fact, while it makes the proposed extension of the Telegraph to that Colony of more importance, will, of itself, be productive of a large amount of business.

There can also be no doubt that this fresh recognition of the obligations imposed upon us by our geographical position will do much to cement the friendly relations and secure the support of Victoria to whom the projected line will be of so much value. These circumstances induce me to recommend the proposition of the Government of Western Australia to the favorable consideration of the Government as a scheme which is to the interest of South Australia to assist in carrying out.

The idea of telegraphic extension to King George's Sound is by no means a new one, it has been frequently advocated both by Mr. McGowan and myself, and Mr. McGowan has on more than one occasion urged the co-operation of Victoria; but now that Western Australia expresses her willingness to construct the line within her own boundary, South Australia may fairly be asked to complete her part.

On a map accompanying this report I have indicated the probable route the line east of Eucla would follow. It will be seen that I propose it shall be carried past the principal squatting stations between Port Augusta and Streaky Bay; thence follow the coast round to Fowler's Bay and the head of the Bight to Eucla, keeping, however, some distance inland as well to avoid the adverse atmospheric influences of the coast as to secure a better line of country. Our longest cartage will be between Port Augusta and Streaky Bay, but from there to Pelinabee, at the head of the Bight, we have a number of convenient landing places, indicated by anchors on the accompanying map. From Pelinabee to Eucla will be the most difficult section—high, precipitous cliffs along the coast and a country behind destitute, I am told, of permanent surface waters.

The length of the line from Port Augusta to Eucla would be about 580 miles.

With regard to cost, that must necessarily depend, to a great extent, on the nature of the country and the availability of local timber. Cypress pines (*callitris*) could be found in places, but would often be difficult to get out on to the line. In view, therefore, of the facilities for landing materials I recommend the use of sawn jarrah timber or light iron poles; and as in either case we should have to import, I am very strongly in favor of an iron line throughout, as the cheapest in the end, though the more costly in the first instance, and certainly, with the precautions I should adopt, the freer from casualties.

The cost accordingly, as iron or sawn jarrah poles were used, would be as follows:—

Iron poles, 16 to mile, and No. 8 wire.....	£36,000.
“ “ “ No. 6 wire (best)	£38,000.
Sawn jarrah poles, 20 to mile, and No. 8 wire	£30,000.

If we used local timber where available the cost would be lessened, but I should prefer iron throughout.

With a line constructed in the substantial manner I propose, it would not be necessary to have more than two stations between Port Augusta and Eucla, say Streaky and Fowler's Bays. At Eucla the stations would, I presume, be conducted at the joint cost of the two Colonies, each having its own operator. The working expenses of the line, therefore, would be very small.

I can hardly frame an estimate of the revenue, but it should be considerably in excess of the working expenses. Perhaps Mr. Barlee's estimate might be accepted as a tolerably close approximation; or, including the receipts from foreign messages, *via* Port Darwin, say about £2,500 as the proportion accruing to South Australia during the first year, increasing with the growth of both Colonies.

I see no objection to the proposed rate of 6s. for ten words, the receipts being equally divided between the two Colonies.

Should the work be authorized, and the necessary provision made by loan, or otherwise, during the present Session of Parliament, the line could be completed by the end of next year, or sooner.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES TODD,

Postmaster-General and Superintendent of Telegraphs.

To the Honorable the Chief Secretary.